

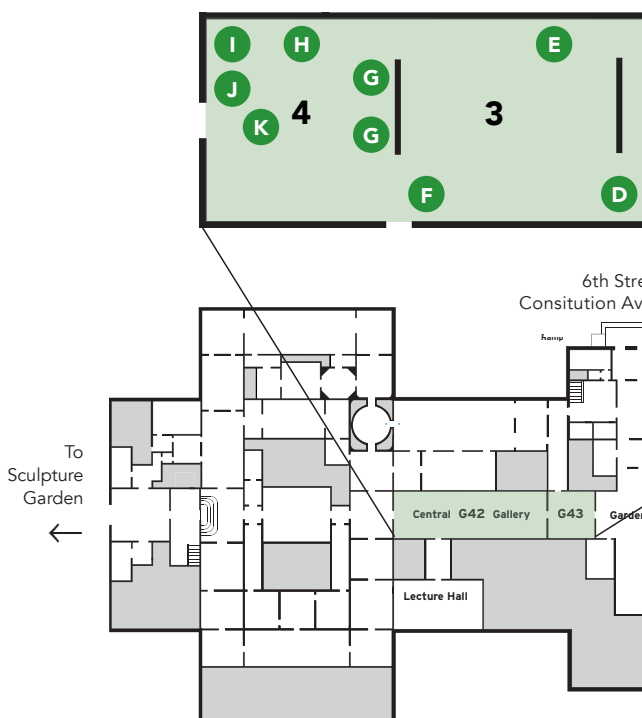
# Collection Highlights

KAUFMAN COLLECTION

WEST BUILDING, GROUND FLOOR

NATIONAL GALLERY OF ART





*This short tour highlights eleven items from the promised gift of the Kaufman collection of American decorative arts with information on the reverse of this sheet. Please do not touch or sit on the furniture or other objects. Always maintain a one-foot distance from the works of art.*

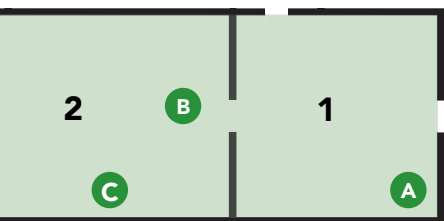


## **Dressing table, Boston, Massachusetts, 1710–1730**

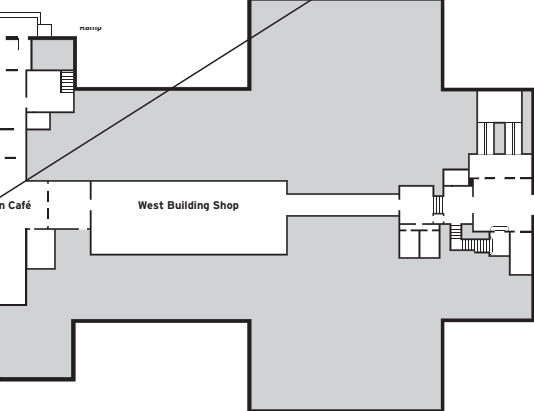
**A**

### **Room 1**

The exotic decoration on this table (and the accompanying mirror) was done using a technique called *japanning*, especially popular in wealthy areas of Boston, where any up-to-date style could be had. After the wood was varnished in a rich tint, raised designs were added in plaster or gesso, then gilded. This table is exceptionally well preserved, with its fragile gesso figures still intact.



Street and  
Revenue Entrance



To East  
Building



**Tea table, attributed to John Townsend, Newport, Rhode Island, 1760–1770**

**B**

### Room 2

In a remarkable tour de force of carving particular to the Goddard and Townsend families of furniture makers in Newport, the talons of the feet of this table are cut almost completely clear of the spheres that they clasp. The “claw-and-ball” motif is believed by many scholars to refer to a mythical Chinese dragon grasping a pearl.



### **High chest, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, 1750–1765**

**C**

#### **Room 2**

Although this high chest (also called a highboy) initially seems quite massive, closer study reveals a graceful verticality, which distinguishes it from other chests nearby. The tall legs, the cutaway “lift” in the lower edge of the chest, and the steep silhouette of the crowning pediment all contribute to the elegance of the composition. The drawer fronts progressively diminish in size from the bottom row upward—a sophisticated way of increasing the illusion of height. The decorative element at the very top shows the taste for asymmetrical design associated with rococo style.



### **Fruit basket, American China Manufactory, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, 1770–1772**

**D**

#### **Room 2/3**

The delicacy and color of tablewares produced by American entrepreneurs Gousse Bonnin and George Anthony Morris rivaled the most desirable characteristics of European and Asian porcelain. The men launched their business when protectionist laws restricted British imports to the colonies. However, after the laws were repealed in 1770, imports flooded back, bankrupting the partners within two years. Consequently, Bonnin and Morris products are very rare.



**Clothes press, Charleston, South Carolina,  
1785–1800**

**E Room 3**

Most scholarship on the history of American furniture has been concentrated on what was produced in New England, New York, and the mid-Atlantic, but Charleston was also a major center of furniture production. The tall profile of this clothes press (used for storage, not for pressing or flattening) would have suited the high ceilings of Charleston's great houses. Although much Charleston furniture was made of cypress, which resists insects, the geographic origin of this clothes press was identified not by the wood, but by the distinctive pattern of the inlaid decoration.



**Side chair, Boston or Salem, Massachusetts,  
1790–1800**

**F Room 3**

The feather motif that forms the splat of this chair is similar to a symbol often associated with the Prince of Wales. The



inclusion of these feathers in American-made furniture might seem odd in view of the revolt of the colonies against the British crown, but cultural ties with Great Britain remained strong even after the colonies gained independence.



**Pair of covered urns, attributed to Matthew Boulton, Birmingham, England, c. 1770 (stone from Derbyshire, England)**

**G Room 4**

Blue john, a stone that comes from a single mine in England, is named after the French words for the blue (*bleu*) and yellow (*jaune*) coloration of the best specimens. The gilded mounts of these urns were probably manufactured by the English metal-stamping and silver company owned by Matthew Boulton Jr. He became more famous as the partner of James Webb, inventor of the steam engines that were also produced in Boulton's factory.



**Grecian couch, attributed to John Finlay and Hugh Finlay, Baltimore, Maryland, 1810–1830**

**H Room 4**

Ancient Greek sofas inspired the asymmetric shape of this couch, but its curves are far more flamboyant. The painted decoration imitates gilt bronze appliques. Successful merchants in Baltimore preferred furniture with exuberantly painted decoration instead of gilt bronze ornaments or veneers of exotic wood because painted furniture had become fashionable in Europe. This couch has been reupholstered in a brilliant yellow, true to the taste of the time.



**Girandole clock, movement by Lemuel Curtis, Concord, Massachusetts, 1813–1820**

**I Room 4**

Like a huge jewel for the wall, this splendid clock sparkles with gilding and color. Its modern name “girandole” comes from the circular element at the bottom of the clock, which resembles circular mirrors of the same name. It is decorated with a picture of Commander Perry’s victory over the British on Lake Erie in 1813. The painting is on the back of the glass, a challenging technique that required the artist to execute his composition from front to back. The clock face is made of enameled iron; and the mechanism was created by Lemuel Curtis, the greatest clockmaker of the time.



**Side chair, attributed to John Finlay and Hugh Finlay, Baltimore, Maryland, 1815–1825**

**J Room 4**

This *klismos* chair, with its curved back and “saber” legs, derives its name and design from a chair pictured on Greek vases. Greek and Roman sources also inspired painted motifs like the delicately curled acanthus leaves on the sides and the *fasces* (bundles of wood) on the front. Lotus blossoms refer to ancient Egyptian art, which became very fashionable around 1810. Napoleon’s invasion of Egypt (1798), the discovery of the Rosetta Stone (1799), and the publication of a nineteen-volume description of Egypt (1809–1828) triggered a widespread interest in everything Egyptian.



**Center table, frame by Anthony Quervelle,  
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, 1827–1830**

K

#### **Room 4**

The presence of a table in the center of a room was a novelty in nineteenth-century America. In earlier times, furniture was usually arranged along the walls, but changes in the way people socialized resulted in new furniture placements. This table is noteworthy for the top, which is inlaid with examples of various types of marble imported from Italy. The interest in identifying and classifying all sorts of animals, plants, and minerals rose toward a zenith in the eighteenth century with the intellectual phenomenon of the Enlightenment. The tabletop shows the continued zeal to increase understanding of the natural world.

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